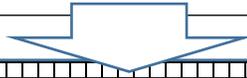


Breaking Barriers: Right To Fight

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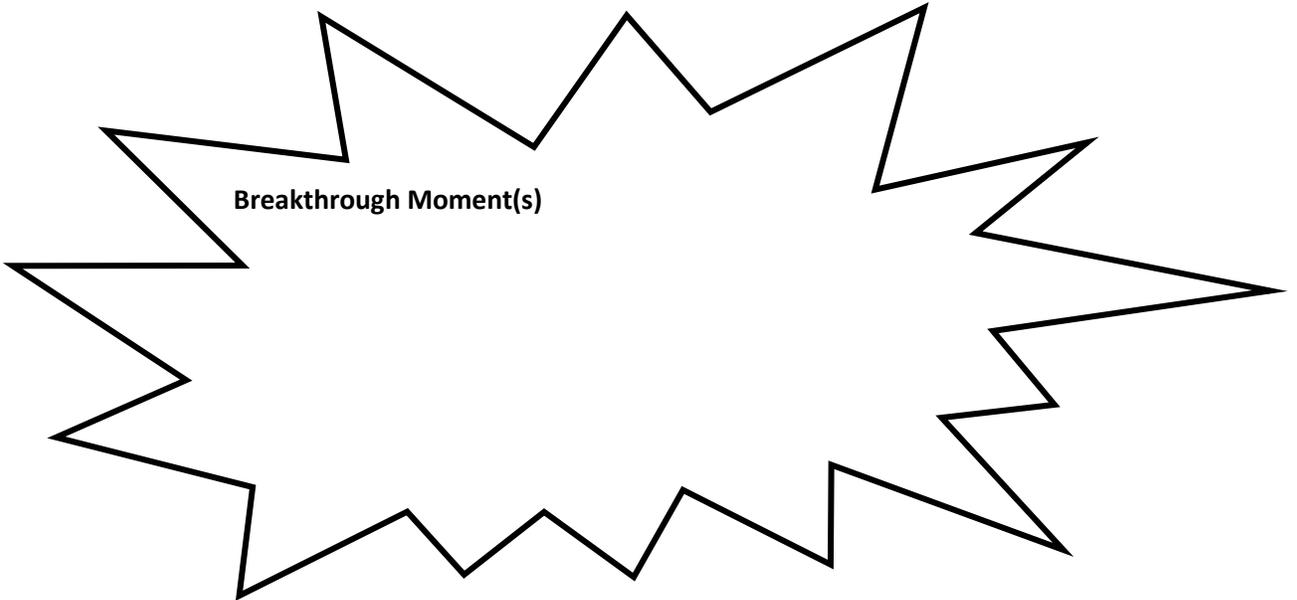
What barriers did African-American soldiers face in World War II and immediately after in their seeking the right to fight as equals?

Background: Based on your analysis and reading, what was going on with African-Americans in World War II in regards with the equal right to fight? (Think about answering: Who, what, where, when, why)



Barriers: What barriers did African-American soldiers face to serving in the Armed forces as equals? (Social, Physical, Cultural, Legal, Geographical, Educational, etc.)

Breakthrough Moment(s)



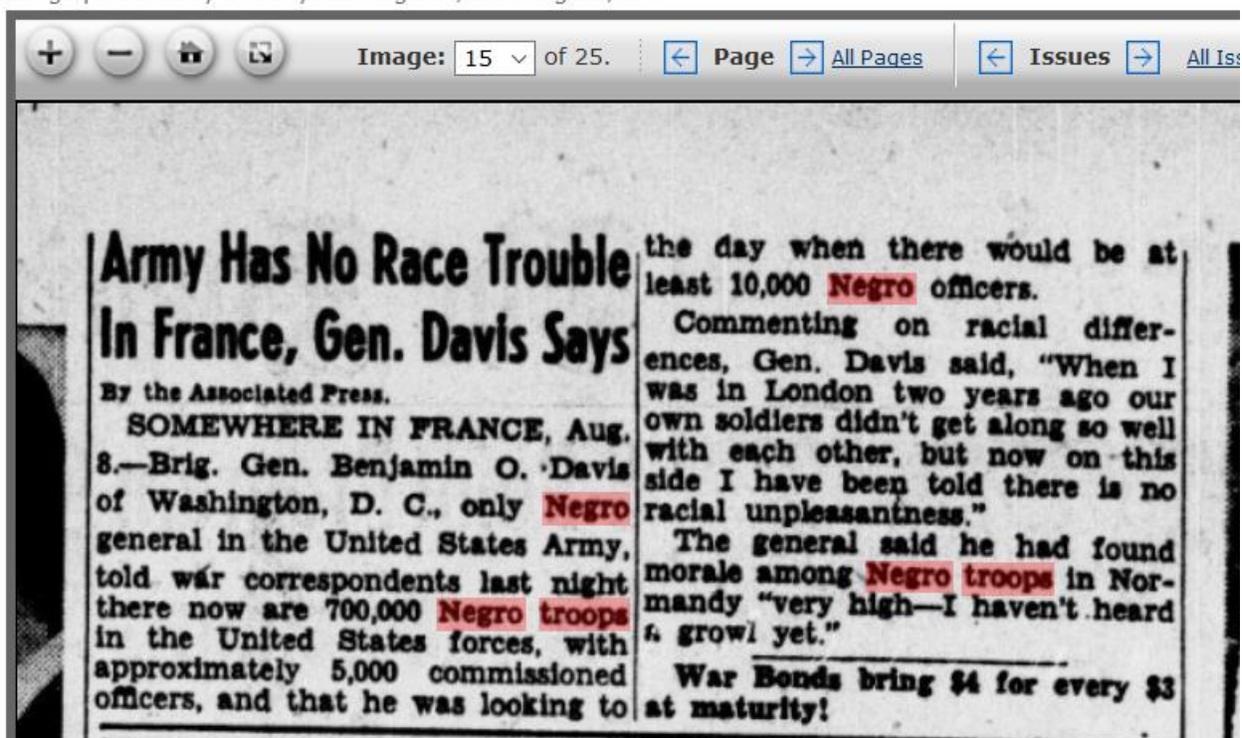
Document Set

Breaking Barriers: Right To Fight

Evening star. [volume], August 08, 1944, Page B-2, Image 15

About [Evening star. \[volume\]](#) (Washington, D.C.) 1854-1972

Image provided by: Library of Congress, Washington, DC



The Detroit tribune., October 17, 1942, Image 1

About [The Detroit tribune. \(Detroit, Mich.\) 1935-1966](#)

Image provided by: Central Michigan University, Clark Historical Library

Image: 1 of 16. Page All Pages Issues All Issues Text PDF JP2 (6.3 MB)

GENERAL SAYS SERVICE MEN TAKE PREJUDICE OVERSEAS

NEW YORK—Frank L. Kluckhohn, in a wireless report to the New York Times from London this week quoted Brig. Gen. Benjamin O. Davis, only Negro general in the U.S. Army, as saying there had been friction between Negro and white soldiers in the British Isles, due partly to resentment on the part of white troops against the way the British people entertain Negro troops. General Davis stated, however, that the friction is not serious or of a nature that cannot be handled by Army officers.

According to the report, General Davis discussed the Negro-white problem with considerable frankness, at a press conference at headquarters, following upon an inspection trip of several weeks duration in which he visited Negro troops in all parts of the island. He said in part:

"I certainly hope the British people will not change their ideas of freedom. I hope you will continue to be as broad as in the past. I hope you will be masters in his own country."

Asked whether Negro troops would be satisfied when the war is over and they return to the United States, the General said:

"I think the whole world is in a new social order. In fact, many changes are being brought about right at home now. I think you are fighting against a few people dominating the world. I think there will be a new social order. I don't believe we're going to let color keep us from winning the war."

"All the colored troops I've talked to have been profuse in their praise of the way they have been received by British soldiers and the British public. Many of them were

(Continued on page 2)

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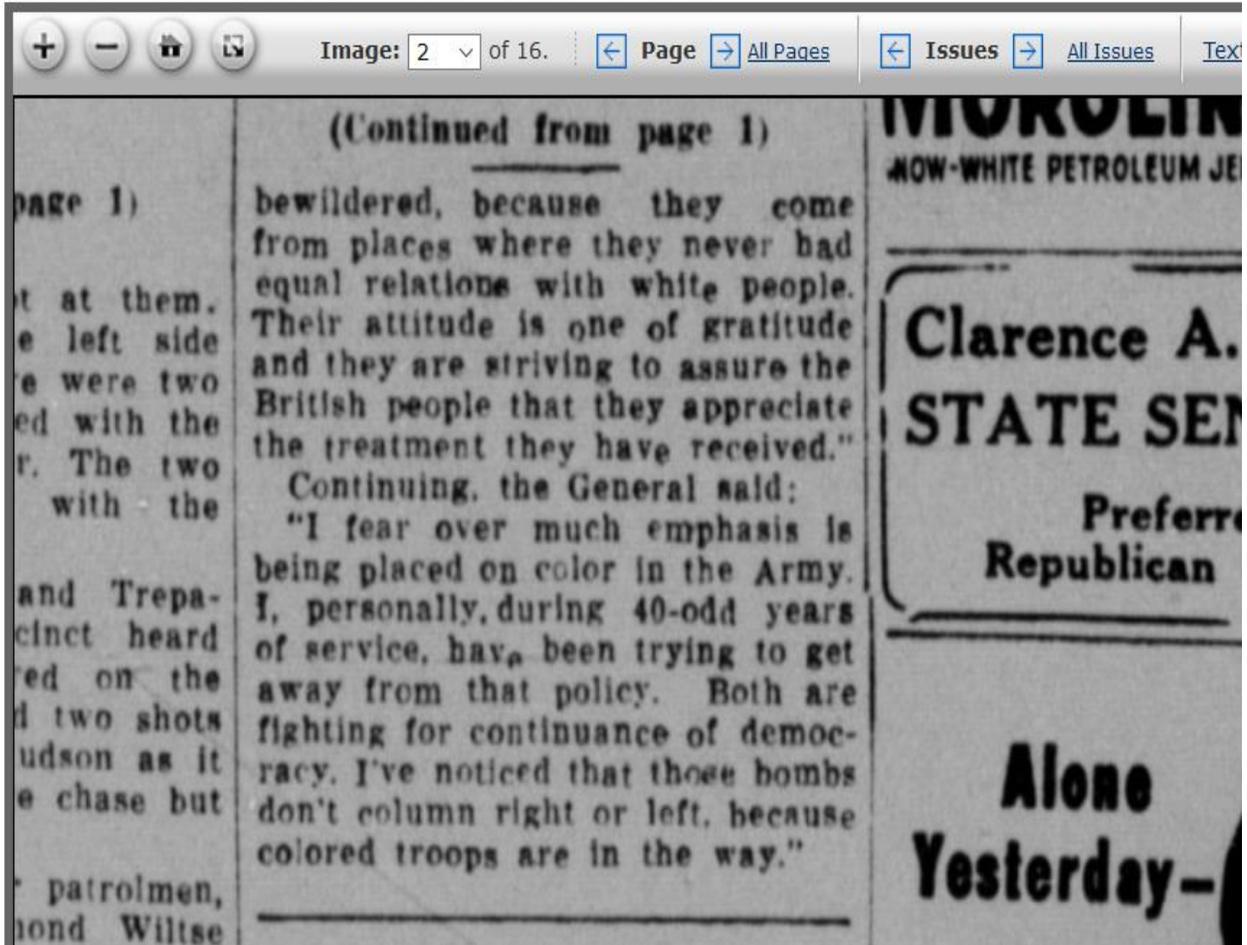
Convict Man For Rape Of 11-Year Old

James Smith, 38, 1537 S

The Detroit tribune., October 17, 1942, Page PAGE TWO, Image 2

About The Detroit tribune. (Detroit, Mich.) 1935-1966

Image provided by: Central Michigan University, Clark Historical Library





"Seeking to rescue a Marine who was drowning in the surf at Iwo Jima, this sextet of Negro soldiers narrowly missed death themselves when their amphibian truck was swamped by heavy seas. From left to right, back row, they are T/5 L. C. Carter, Jr., Private John Bonner, Jr., Staff Sergeant Charles R. Johnson. Standing, from left to right, are T/5 A. B. Randle, T/5 Homer H. Gaines, and Private Willie Tellie." March 11, 1945. S/Sgt. W. H. Feen. 127-N-114329

RESTRICTED

QUESTION: "How well did the colored soldiers in this company perform in combat?"

	White officers	White non-coms
Not well at all	0%	0%
Not so well	0%	1%
Fairly well	16%	17%
Very well	84%	81%
Undecided	<u>0%</u>	<u>1%</u>
	100%	100%

NOTE: In commenting on this question, respondents frequently gave detailed accounts of combat performance. Positive qualities stressed were aggressiveness in attack, effective use of fire-power, adeptness at close-in fighting, team-work in battle. Negative qualities reported in a few instances were that at first the men sometimes went forward too rapidly -- too far in an attack. Some officers stressed the fact that these colored soldiers, being volunteers, may have had exceptional combat qualities. Others mentioned that in their units there had not been an adequate test under the most severe type of fighting, such as sustained attacks under heavy mortar or artillery fire. It should be noted, however, that the performance of the colored troops was rated just as high, if not higher, by the white officers and non-coms in those companies in which the colored platoons have had severe fighting as by respondents from other units.

QUESTION: "With the same Army training and experience, how do you think colored troops compare with white troops as infantry soldiers?"

	White officers	White non-coms
Not as good as white troops	5%	4%
Just the same as white troops	69%	83%
Better than white troops	17%	9%
No answer	<u>9%</u>	<u>4%</u>
	100%	100%



Opinions About Negro Infantry Platoons in White Companies of 7 Divisions; 4/3/1945; Negro Platoons in White Companies; Army Files, 1948 - 1950; Records of Temporary Committees, Commissions, and Boards, Record Group 220; Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, MO. [Online Version, <https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/negro-infantry-platoons-white-companies>, July 11, 2019]

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PITTSBURGH COURIER

March 4, 1938

Dr. Ernest H. Wilkins, President
Oberlin College
Oberlin, Ohio

My dear Doctor Wilkins:

Although colored citizens have participated with honor and distinction in every war the United States has fought and died in the thousands that this grand Republic might live, they are today barred from virtually all service in our army and navy which they help support.

They are not permitted to serve in the air corps, the coast artillery corps, the tank corps, the engineer corps, the chemical warfare service, the field artillery, the signal or any of the other special services. They serve only in the infantry, cavalry, and to a small extent in the quartermaster and medical corps, and many of these supposedly combatant troops are assigned to duty as servants at army service schools. In the navy they are rigidly restricted to service as mess attendants.

Our army and navy are honeycombed with spies of alien extraction and connections who are easily able to enlist in our most vital services merely because they are white. No American Negro, soldier or civilian, has ever been suspected or convicted of betraying this country.

We do not believe that the thinking white people of this country are acquainted with this situation or would approve of it if they were. We are trying to have all branches of the army and navy opened to colored youth so that our nation may be certain of a trained reservoir of loyal, intelligent and dependable men. What is your view on this question?

Do you believe that all branches of the army and naval service should be opened to Negroes (they are over 99% native born)? Or do you think there should be an entire Negro division, including all arms of the service and officered at least in the line, by educated colored men, in the army; and a squadron completely manned by Negroes in the navy?

We feel this question is important at this time when the whole matter of national defense is uppermost in our minds and the dangers of fascism, nazism and communism are more real than ever before.

We shall appreciate a brief reply embodying your candid opinion on this question.

Yours very truly,
R. L. Vann, Editor



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Letter from R. L. Vann to Ernest H. Wilkins; 3/4/1938; V; General Correspondence Files, 1948 - 1950; Records of Temporary Committees, Commissions, and Boards, 1893 - 2008; Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, MO. [Online Version, <https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/letter-rl-vann-ernest-h-wilkins>, July 11, 2019]

Document Set 2

Executive Order 9981 Transcription

Establishing the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity In the Armed Forces.

WHEREAS it is essential that there be maintained in the armed services of the United States the highest standards of democracy, with equality of treatment and opportunity for all those who serve in our country's defense:

NOW THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States, by the Constitution and the statutes of the United States, and as Commander in Chief of the armed services, it is hereby ordered as follows:

1. It is hereby declared to be the policy of the President that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin. This policy shall be put into effect as rapidly as possible, having due regard to the time required to effectuate any necessary changes without impairing efficiency or morale.
2. There shall be created in the National Military Establishment an advisory committee to be known as the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, which shall be composed of seven members to be designated by the President.
3. The Committee is authorized on behalf of the President to examine into the rules, procedures and practices of the Armed Services in order to determine in what respect such rules, procedures and practices may be altered or improved with a view to carrying out the policy of this order. The Committee shall confer and advise the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Army, the Secretary of the Navy, and the Secretary of the Air Force, and shall make such recommendations to the President and to said Secretaries as in the judgment of the Committee will effectuate the policy hereof.
4. All executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government are authorized and directed to cooperate with the Committee in its work, and to furnish the Committee such information or the services of such persons as the Committee may require in the performance of its duties.

5. When requested by the Committee to do so, persons in the armed services or in any of the executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government shall testify before the Committee and shall make available for use of the Committee such documents and other information as the Committee may require.

6. The Committee shall continue to exist until such time as the President shall terminate its existence by Executive order.

Harry Truman

The White House
July 26, 1948

<https://www.archivesfoundation.org/documents/executive-order-9981-ending-segregation-armed-forces/>